

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-13 EUR-12 /082 W

-----059429 280741Z /11

R 280605Z SEP 77

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8987

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SF

SUBJECT: PARTIES GEAR UP FOR ELECTIONS

REF: PRETORIA 4945

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER VORSTER'S SEPTEMBER 20 ANNOUNCEMENT OF ELECTIONS HAS SPARKED A GREAT DEAL OF POLITICAL MANEUVERING AND SPECULATION. THE NATIONAL PARTY IS EXPECTING TO MAKE BIG GAINS AND HAS BEEN ENCOURAGED BY A RECENT PUBLIC OPINION POLL WHICH SHOWS ITS POPULARITY HAS GROWN SINCE THE 1974 ELECTIONS. THE CHANCES FOR AN OPPOSITION PACT BETWEEN THE PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY AND THE NEW REPUBLIC PARTY APPEAR TO HAVE COLLAPSED. THE TWO OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES, BOTH QUITE SMALL, STAND LITTLE CHANCE OF GAINING STRENGTH. INTERESTING RACES ARE SHAPING UP IN A NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL CONSTITUENCIES. END SUMMARY.

2. THE WEEK SINCE PRIME MINISTER VORSTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT ELECTIONS ARE TO BE HELD NOVEMBER 30 HAS SEEN A FLURRY OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY. NATIONAL PARTY (NP) MEMBERS ARE GEARING
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UP FOR THE CAMPAIGN, AND ARE CONFIDENT OF PICKING UP A NUMBER OF SEATS. THEIR EXPECTATIONS HAVE BEEN BOOSTED BY A POLL APPEARING IN RAPPORT, THE AFRIKAANS SUNDAY NEWSPAPER, SHOWING THAT SUPPORT FOR THE NP IS INCREASING, PARTICULARLY AMONG ENGLISH-SPEAKERS. THE POLL INDICATES THAT FROM MARCH 1974 TO THE PRESENT, SUPPORT FOR THE NP HAS RISEN AMONG ALL WHITE VOTERS FROM 57.6 PERCENT TO 64.4 PERCENT. THE NP ANTICIPATES

MAKING NEW INROADS PARTICULARLY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN PARTY (SAP) AND THE NEW REPUBLIC PARTY (NRP). INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE NATS INTEND TO MOUNT A SPECIAL EFFORT IN NATAL, WHERE THEY EXPECT TO BOOST THEIR SEATS IN PARLIAMENT FROM FIVE TO TEN. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY HOPE TO CAPTURE THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL, WHICH, AT PRESENT, IS THE ONLY ONE OF THE FOUR PROVINCIAL COUNCILS NOT UNDER NATIONALIST CONTROL.

3. IN THE OPPOSITION RANKS MOST INTEREST HAS CENTERED ON THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ELECTION PACT BETWEEN THE TWO LARGEST OPPOSITION PARTIES, THE NRP AND THE PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY (PFP). THERE WAS AN INITIAL PERIOD OF EXPECTATION THAT AN AGREEMENT COULD BE NEGOTIATED AFTER A SERIES OF CONCILIATORY STATEMENTS BY LEADERS OF BOTH PARTIES. FOLLOWING A MEETING OF THE PFP NATIONAL EXECUTIVE ON SEPTEMBER 25, HOWEVER, PARTY CHAIRMAN RAY SWART INFORMED NRP LEADER RADCLYFFE CADMAN THAT THE PFP COULD NOT ENTER INTO A PACT UNLESS THE NRP ACCEPTED THE PRINCIPLE OF AN OPEN SOCIETY. THIS SEEMS TO HAVE EFFECTIVELY RULED OUT A PACT, ALTHOUGH THERE MAY BE "INFORMAL ARRANGEMENTS" IN A FEW CONSTITUENCIES WHICH WOULD CERTAINLY GO TO THE NP IF THE OPPOSITION VOTE WERE SPLIT. THE FAILURE OF THE OPPOSITION TO REACH AN AGREEMENT MAY RESULT IN NP GAINS IN UP TO TWENTY CONSTITUENCIES AROUND THE COUNTRY. THE PFP DECISION SUGGESTS THAT THE PARTY'S MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO REPLACE THE NRP AS THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION EVEN IF THIS MEANS THAT THE OVERALL NP MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT IS ACTUALLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STRENGTHENED. THE DECISION FOLLOWS EDITORIALS IN A NUMBER OF LIBERAL NEWSPAPERS, INCLUDING THE RAND DAILY MAIL, THE SUNDAY TIMES, AND THE SUNDAY EXPRESS, CALLING ON THE PFP NOT TO ENTER INTO ALLIANCES WITH PARTIES WHICH DO NOT SHARE ITS PRINCIPLES. CURIOUSLY, DIE TRANSVALER, NP MOUTH-PIECE IN THE TRANSVAAL, ALSO REJECTED THE IDEA OF AN OPPOSITION PACT, NOT BECAUSE IT WOULD HURT THE NP, BUT BECAUSE IT BELIEVES, AS DOES THE LIBERAL PRESS, THAT THE VOTERS MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN MULTI-RACIALISM (PFP) AND MULTI-NATIONALISM (NP) AND SHOULD NOT "SHELDER ON AN ISLAND (NRP) BETWEEN THE TWO STORMS". THESE EDITORIAL COMMENTS REFLECT A GROWING BELIEF THAT, TO THE EXTENT THERE IS A CONTEST IN THIS ELECTION, IT IS ESSENTIALLY BETWEEN THE NP AND THE PFP, AND THAT OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE DESTINED TO FADE INTO OBSCURITY. ONE AFRIKANER EDITOR TOLD US THAT HE EXPECTS THE CURRENT OFFICIAL OPPOSITION, THE NRP, TO COME OUT OF THE ELECTION WITH NO MORE THAN A FEW ISOLATED SEATS.

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4. THE SMALLER OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE ALSO PREPARING TO MOUNT CAMPAIGNS, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE NOT EXPECTED TO DO WELL. THE SOUTH AFRICAN PARTY IS REPORTED TO BE VIRTUALLY WITHOUT FUNDS OR PARTY ORGANIZATION, AND WILL PROBABLY BE UNABLE TO RETAIN THE SIX SEATS IT NOW HOLDS. THE ULTRA-RIGHT WING HERSTIGTE NASIONALE PARTY (HNP) INTENDS TO RUN CANDIDATES IN SEVERAL CONSTITUENCIES AND REPORTEDLY HOPES TO WIN AT LEAST THREE SEATS, BUT MOST OBSERVERS DOUBT THAT IT WILL PICK UP MORE THAN A MINUSCULE PERCENTAGE OF THE VOTE IN ANY CONSTITUENCY. ONE MEASURE OF A NATIONALIST VICTORY WILL BE WHETHER IT REDUCES FURTHER THE SMALL POPULAR VOTE OF 3 PERCENT WHICH THE HNP RECEIVED IN 1974.

5. INTERESTING RACES APPEAR TO BE SHAPING UP IN A NUMBER OF CONSTITUENCIES AROUND THE COUNTRY AS LEADING POLITICIANS JOCKEY FOR POSITION. ONE HARD-FOUGHT RACE COULD BE THE MUSGRAVE CONSTITUENCY IN NATAL, WHERE PFP CHAIRMAN RAY SWART MAY STAND AGAINST NRP PARLIAMENTARY LEADER RADCLYFFE CADMAN. EX-NATIONALIST JUSTICE KOWIE MARAIS (PFP FEDERAL EXECUTIVE) MAY CONTEST A SEAT IN THE NP STRONGHOLD OF PRETORIA. RUMORS ARE ALSO APPEARING IN THE PRESS AND IN POLITICAL CIRCLES THAT

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CERTAIN CABINET MINISTERS AND OTHER PARTY LEADERS MAY STEP DOWN AND NOT SEEK REELECTION. NAMES MENTIONED INCLUDE MINISTER OF BANTU AFFAIRS M.C. BOTHA, MINISTER OF SOCIAL WELFARE J.P. VAN DER SPUY (WHO WAS DEFEATED EARLIER THIS MONTH IN A

BID TO BE REELECTED AS ORANGE FREE STATE LEADER OF THE NP),
AND THE NRP'S EX-INTERIM LEADER, SIR DE VILLIERS GRAAF.
BOWDLER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
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Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 PRETORIA 4945
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1102412
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PARTIES GEAR UP FOR ELECTIONS
TAGS: PINT, SF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/96ae3b3b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009